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Taking the lead in commercialisation

THE Research and Innovation Management Centre (RIMC) at Universiti Utara Malaysia has three main focus areas — research, innovation and commercialisation.

"The RIMC functions as the core research centre for the whole University, and co-ordinates and monitors all research projects carried out in UUM. This would include research funded by both external and internal grants, and all innovation and commercialisation activities. Even any exhibitions that UUM takes part in will be handled by the RIMC," explains Associate Professor Dr Mohd Fo'ad Sakdan, Director of the RIMC.

One such exhibition is the upcoming iENA 2012, an international trade fair that will take place from 1 to 4 Nov in Nuremberg, Germany where the RIMC will be showcasing its products to an international audience.

"The products that we will be showcasing will be IT-based, for example software. These products were developed by UUM professors with the help of doctoral students. One such product that we have developed is a job-matching portal. Students will key in their results into the portal and upon completion, will be given a score and with this score

they will be matched with potential employers," Professor Fo'ad says.

RIMC's focus lies mainly in the commercialisation of IT-based products. Last year, UUM was declared by the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia (MOHE) as the public university that generated the highest number of commercialised products, valued at RM3.7 million.

"Last year we commercialised four ICT-related products that were sold locally. These products were purchased by various ministries and also other universities. MyMOHES is one product that we developed for the Ministry of Higher Education to collate data about all the universities in Malaysia," says Professor Fo'ad.

Some of UUM's products have received international recognition — the Service Oriented Architecture Based Extraction, Transformation and Loading was awarded the Gold and Best award at the Malaysia Technology Expo last year.

The Animated Pop-Up Science Book: A Fun Way to Learn Science won the Gold and Special Jury Award at the 39th Exhibition of Inventions in Geneva last year, while the Real-Time

Face Recognition and Personality Identification System Using Appearance Model Algorithm was awarded Gold at the Seoul International Invention Fair 2011.

The university has submitted its application for research university status to the MOHE, and will be evaluated sometime early next year to ensure that it meets the stipulated criteria.

As the number of researchers at UUM has increased to almost 400 and the research community has become more vibrant, the role of the RIMC has also expanded. This has led to the establishment of a new Innovation Centre at UUM.

The RIMC now focuses wholly on research while the Innovation Centre focuses on innovation and commercialisation.

The university is now placing a lot of emphasis on commercialisation, much encouraged by its excellent performance as the only university that has exceeded the 30 per cent self-sustaining target set by the MOHE. UUM has set a target of 40 per cent for next year and all activities are geared towards this target.

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